CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY OF THE COSTABELLA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AREA, BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

Prepared for

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ABSTRACT

On behalf of Embrey Partners, Ltd., SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) conducted a cultural resource investigation of the Costabella Development project area, located on the north side of Loop 1604 near the intersection with Huebner Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The approximately 32-acre property is bordered by the Vineyard residential development on the north, the Fund commercial development on the east, Loop 1604 and undeveloped property on the south, and undeveloped property on the west. Two dry drainages form the east and west edges of the property, which are truncated into culverts under Loop 1604 and continue southward. The approximately 32-acre property will be platted into three parts, multi family housing consisting of approximately 19 acres, commercial property consisting of about 7.5 acres, and about 5.5 acres of undeveloped drainage lows. The cultural resource investigation consisted of an archaeological background review followed by a surface pedestrian survey of the entire project area, with particular attention to the two drainages that flank the project area. The purpose of the investigation was to determine if the undertaking would adversely affect significant cultural resources.

The background review revealed that no archaeological surveys have been conducted within the project area, and no previously recorded archaeological sites are within the project area. In addition, no standing structures were found on the property. One survey was conducted and four archaeological sites were previously recorded within 1 mile of the project area; the survey did not record any archaeological sites, and none of the four previously recorded sites were evaluated for their eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places.

During the field investigation, an archaeologist walked across the entire 32-acre parcel, with particular attention paid to the drainages. Due to the shallowness of the soils, no shovel tests were excavated. A rock pile was seen towards the northern end of the property, which appeared to be a collection of large stones from across the property, but no cultural material was observed. Based on these findings, the proposed project will have no effect on significant cultural resources. No additional archaeological investigations are recommended.

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

PROJECT TITLE: Cultural Resource Survey of the Costabella Development Project Area, Bexar County, Texas.

SWCA PROJECT NUMBER: 9550-004.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: SWCA was contracted to conduct a survey of the Costabella Development project area, which were recommended for survey the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office (HPO). The Costabella Development project would involve various surface and subsurface impacts related to the construction of retail and residential space, utilities, parking facilities, and landscaping. An archaeological background records review of the project area was conducted, and based on these results, the current investigation concentrated on a surface investigation of the hillside and a visual examination of the drainages along each side of the project area.

LOCATION: The Costabella Development project area is located along the north side of Loop 1604 near the intersection with Huebner Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The 32-acre property is bordered by the Vineyard residential development on the north, the Fund commercial development on the east, Loop 1604 and undeveloped property on the south, and undeveloped property on the west. Two dry drainages form the east and west edges of the property, which are truncated into culverts under Loop 1604 and continue southward. The property is depicted on the Castle Hills USGS 7.5-minute topographic map.

NUMBER OF ACRES SURVEYED: Approximately 32 acres.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kevin A. Miller.

DATES OF WORK: April 7, 2005.

PURPOSE OF WORK: The project sponsor is complying with the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation and Design Section of the Unified Development Code.

NUMBER OF SITES: None.

CURATION: No artifacts were collected, and nothing was curated.

COMMENTS: The Costabella Development project area consisted of upland terraces flanked by dry drainages with exposed bedrock bottoms. The existing soils were very thin and exposed bedrock could be seen throughout the project area. Thus, only a surface pedestrian survey was conducted. Evidence of clearing was seen on the project area, as several large limestone boulders were piled up at the back end (northernmost) of the property. A brush fire had also passed through the area, and some portions of the bedrock and tree stumps showed evidence of burning. No cultural material was observed, and no further work is recommended.

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of Embrey Partners, Ltd., SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) conducted a cultural resource investigation of the Costabella Development project area, located on the north side of Loop 1604 near the intersection with Huebner Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas (Figure 1). The investigations consisted of an archaeological background review followed by a surface pedestrian survey of the entire project area, with particular attention to the two drainages that flank the project area. The purpose of the investigation was to determine if the undertaking would adversely affect significant cultural resources, and to assist in complying with the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation and Design Section of the Unified Development Code.

Mindy Bonine, the project archaeologist, conducted the survey on April 7, 2005.

DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA

The Costabella Development project area is a roughly parallelogram-shaped property located along the north side of Loop 1604 near the intersection with Huebner Road, San Antonio, Texas (Figure 2). Two dry drainages make up the eastern and western boundaries, and the edge of the project area matches with the bottom of each drainage (Figure 3). The property is currently undeveloped. The approximately 32-acre property is bordered by the Vineyard residential development on the north, with the backyards of houses bordering the project area, the Fund commercial development on the east past the drainage, Loop 1604 and undeveloped property on the south, and undeveloped property past the drainage on the west. The two dry drainages are truncated into culverts under Loop 1604 and continue southward. The closest perennial water source is Panther Springs, which is approximately 1 km to the east, and the drainages flow into Panther Springs farther to the south. The property is depicted on the Castle Hills USGS 7.5-minute topographic map.

The project area is exclusively mapped as the Cretaceous Edwards Limestone formation. This formation is characterized as containing abundant fine to coarse-grained chert and fossil rudistids as reefs and individuals, miliolids, and shell fragments (Barnes 1983). The soils within the project area consist of Tarrant association soils. The topography is gently undulating, and the soils overlaying limestone substrata are dark colored, very shallow, calcareous, and clayey (Taylor et al. 1991).

The property is located within the Edwards Plateau region as defined by Gould (1975), and the Balconian biotic zone (Blair 1950). Upland areas are dominated by a mixed live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and Ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashei*) woodland interspersed with occasional grassy openings. The lower elevation areas along the riparian zone often include a dense understory of acacia, prickly pear, and other brushy species (Petrides 1988; Simpson 1988). Common mammals of the Balconian biotic zone include white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), and deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatis*). In addition, bison (*Bison bison*), mountain lion (*Felis concolor*), and black bear (*Ursus americanus*) would have been present prehistorically (Davis and Schmidly 1994). Bird species composition in the project area is fairly diverse with numerous breeding, migrant, and wintering species present (Davis and Schmidly 1994). In addition to mammals and birds, Blair (1950) lists at least 75 species of amphibians and reptiles within the Balconian Province.

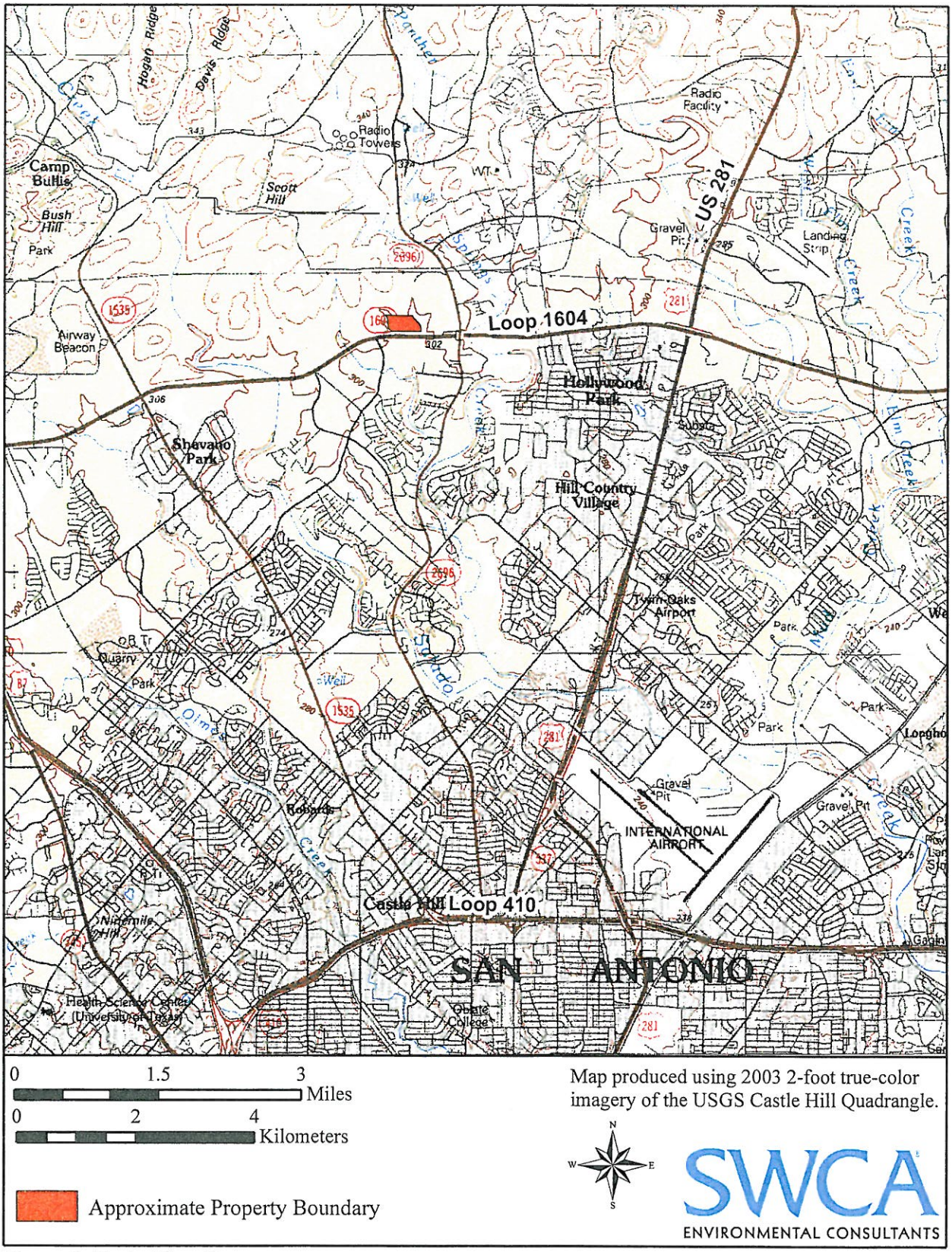

Figure 1. Project location map.

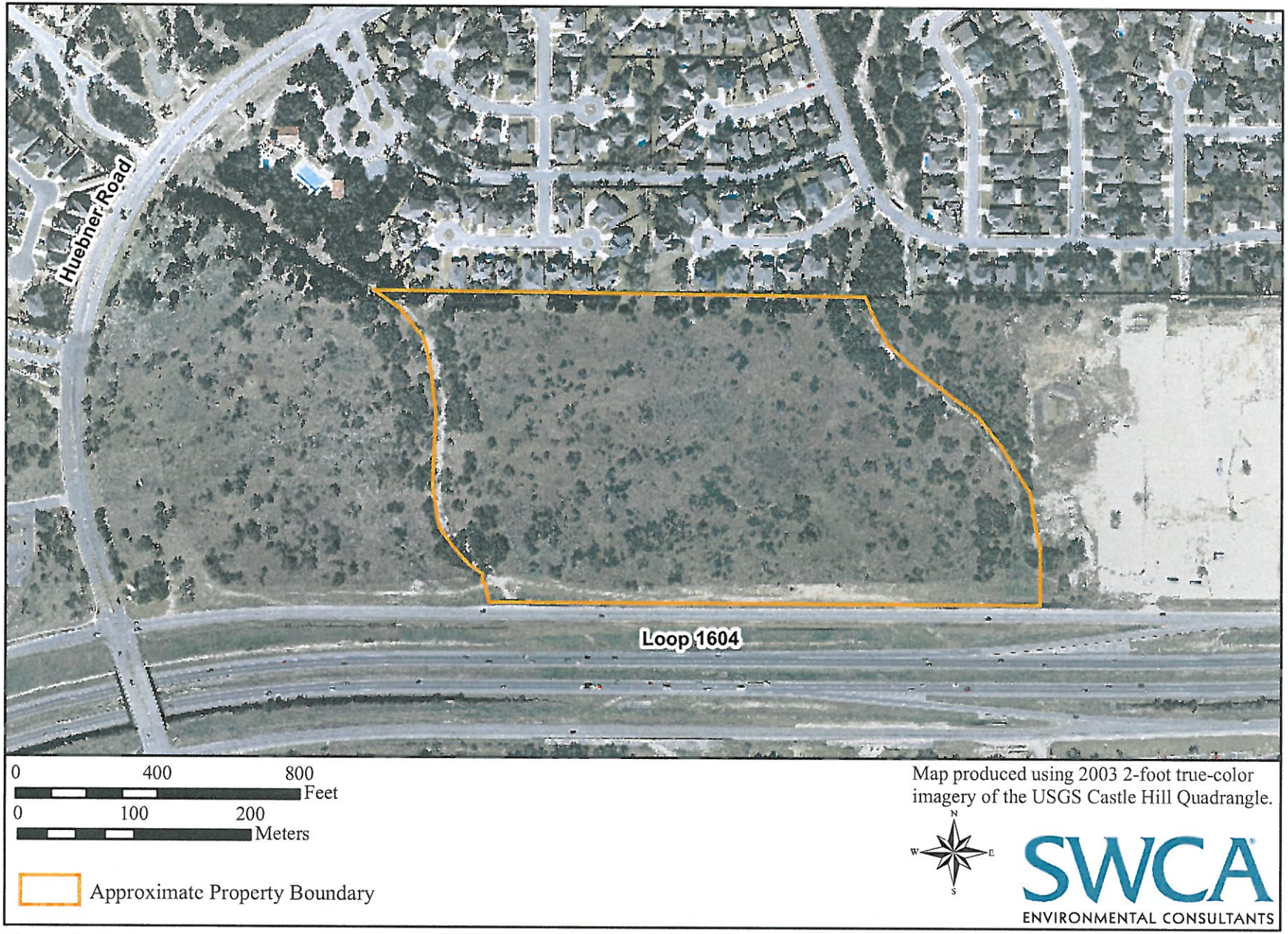

Figure 2. Project area map.

Figure 3. Bottom of drainage bordering the western side of the project area.

The proposed development of the 32-acre property would include the platting of three parts, multi family housing consisting of approximately 19 acres, commercial property consisting of about 7.5 acres, and about 5.5 acres of undeveloped drainage lows. Drainage easements would be established at the edges of the project area. Utilities would be installed underground.

METHODS

BACKGROUND REVIEW

SWCA conducted a background archeological literature and records search of the 32-acre Costabella Development property in April 2005. An SWCA archaeologist searched the Texas Historic Sites Atlas (Atlas) online database for any previously recorded surveys and historic or prehistoric archeological sites located in or near the project area. In addition to identifying recorded archeological sites, the review included the following types of information on the Atlas: National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) properties, State Archeological Landmarks (SALs), Official Texas Historical Markers (OTHMs), Registered Texas Historic Landmarks (RTHLs), cemeteries, and local neighborhood surveys. The archaeologist also examined the following sources: the *Soil Survey of Bexar County, Texas*, the *Geologic Atlas of Texas*, and the Castle Hills USGS 7.5-minute topographic maps of the project area. A review of aerial photographs was conducted to assist in determining whether any standing structures are located on the property and utilized maps and photos on the City of San Antonio's GIS Mapping Application, an online resource (http://maps.sanantonio.gov/website/COSAMaps/viewer.asp).

FIELD METHODS

SWCA conducted a cultural resource survey of the Costabella Development project area, in order to determine the nature, extent, and if possible, significance of any cultural resources located within the property boundaries. The survey consisted of an archaeologist walking the project area with particular focus paid to the two drainages flanking either side. During the survey, the ground surface and erosional profiled were examined for cultural resources. If the depth of soils allowed shovel testing, they were 30 cm in diameter and excavated to bedrock or culturally sterile deposits. The matrix from each shovel test was screened through ¼-inch mesh, and the location was recorded on a global positioning system (GPS) unit. A shovel test form was completed for each test.

Any observed archaeological sites were defined and the location recorded on USGS 7.5-milute topographic maps and with a GPS unit. Artifacts were not collected; rather they were tabularized, analyzed, and documented in the field. Temporally diagnostic artifacts were photographed and left in place. An archaeological site form was completed for each site.

RESULTS

BACKGROUND REVIEW

The background review revealed that no archaeological surveys have been conducted within the project area, and no previously recorded archaeological sites are within the project area. In addition, no standing structures were found on the property. However, within 1 mile of the project area, there is one previous survey conducted for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1977. This previous survey is located south of the project area and Loop 1604. No additional information was available on the THC's on-line database

regarding the previous survey, however no sites were recorded within the survey's project area near Loop 1604. In addition, four previously recorded sites are located within 1 mile of the project area. They are 41BX65, 41BX501, 41BX363, and 41BX364. All the sites are prehistoric occupations locales. Site 41BX65 is a prehistoric open campsite and lithic procurement area consisting of assorted debitage, bifaces, unifaces, and other assorted tools. This site is located approximately 0.5 miles east of the project area, north of Loop 1604. Site 41BX501 is a prehistoric lithic procurement area with assorted lithic debitage and core fragments. This site is located 0.5 miles southeast of the project area, south of Loop 1604 and east of Blanco Road. Site 41BX363 is a small open campsite with assorted lithic debitage and one possible hearth feature. This site is located 0.25 miles south of site 41BX501, east of Blanco Road. Lastly, site 41BX364 is a small rock shelter with assorted lithic debitage, a projectile point, and a possible hearth. This site is approximately 0.2 miles southeast of 41BX363.

Field Survey

On April 7, 2005, an SWCA archaeologist conducted an intensive pedestrian survey of the entire project area. Observing the property in the field, it was determined that all of the soils within the project area, including the areas surrounding the drainages, were very shallow (Figure 4). Bedrock could be seen throughout the project area. Thus, a surface visual reconnaissance was conducted, examining the ground surface.

The archaeologist first walked the perimeter of the project area, beginning along the sides of the drainages to look for possible erosional profiles that may contain evidence of prehistoric or historic occupations. A search was also made for any cultural material that may have been washed down from higher elevations, indicating possible sites along the terraces above the drainage. The section at the rear (northern) edge of the property as well as the front (southern) edge of the property was investigated during the perimeter search. No surface artifacts were observed, but evidence of a brush fire towards the northwest corner of the project area was seen. The exposed bedrock showed evidence of burning, and surface vegetation was charred. In addition, a pile of large limestone boulders was located at the center rear of the project area. They were likely dragged to that location from different areas of the property by heavy machinery; a heavy cable was also found tangled among the rocks (Figure 5). Brush cover around the rocks indicates this activity was not performed recently.

After traversing the perimeter, transects were walked that spanned the terrain of the interior of the project area, and all open areas were searched for cultural resources. Any flattish areas on the upslope surrounding the drainages were investigated, as well as the terraces above them. Approximately eight transects were traversed from north to south, but the archaeologist walked off the transect numerous times to investigate nearby open areas. The project area was found to be full of natural chert cobbles mixed with the bedrock, along with associated chert chunks, but no culturally modified chert of any kind was observed. Likewise, no other types of cultural material were observed during the archaeological survey.

Summary and Recommendations

SWCA conducted a cultural resource investigation of the Costabella Development project area, a 32-acre property located on the north side of Loop 1604 near the intersection with Huebner Road, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. The work was designed to determine if the undertaking would adversely affect sig-

Figure 4. Photo of typical terrain within the project area.

Figure 5. Rock pile found at rear of property, note tangled cable and brush.

nificant cultural resources, and to comply with the City of San Antonio's Historic Preservation and Design Section of the Unified Development Code.

The background review revealed that no archaeological surveys have been conducted within the project area, and no previously recorded archaeological sites are within the project area. In addition, no standing structures were found on the property. Within 1 mile of the project area, one previous survey was conducted and four archaeological sites were previously recorded; the survey did not record any archaeological sites, and none of the four previously recorded sites were evaluated for their eligibility to the NRHP or listing as an SAL. The project area is contained within the Cretaceous Edwards Limestone formation, and the soils fall within the Tarrant association.

During the field investigation, an archaeologist walked across the entire 32-acre parcel, with particular attention paid to the drainages. Due the to shallowness of the soils, no shovel tests were excavated. A rock pile was seen towards the northern end of the property, which appeared to be a collection of large stones from across the property, and evidence of a brush fire was found within the northwest corner.

No cultural material, features, intact deposits, or historic features were encountered during the pedestrian survey. Based on these findings, no significant cultural resources will be affected by the proposed project, and no additional archaeological investigations are recommended.

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